

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 0075

EXDIS

PASS WHITE HOUSE FOR HAMILTON JORDAN

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PN, PBOR
SUBJECT: TORRIJOS-BAKER MEETING

1. SENATOR BAKER AND HIS COLLEAGUES, GARN (UTAH) AND CHAFEE (R.I.) HAD A GOOD AND CANDID TALK WITH GENERAL TORRIJOS AT THE END OF THEIR DAY-LONG SOJOURN INTO THE COUNTRYSIDE. BAKER TOLD TORRIJOS THAT HE FRANKLY DID NOT THINK THE PANAMA TREATIES AS WRITTEN WOULD WIN SENATE APPROVAL. HE SAID, HOWEVER, THAT WITH APPROPRIATE MODIFICATIONS IN THE FORM OF AMENDMENTS OR RESERVATIONS THAT MET THE PRINCIPAL CONCERNS OF HIMSELF AND SENATE COLLEAGUES THE TREATIES HAD A CHANCE FOR APPROVAL. HE SAID THAT IF THE TREATIES WERE ALTERED TO MEET HIS OWN MAIN WORRIES HE (BAKER) WOULD SUPPORT RATIFICATION. THE ONLY SPECIFICS THAT WERE MENTIONED WERE THE TWO POINTS COVERED IN THE CARTER-TORRIJOS MEMO OF UNDERSTANDING OF OCTOBER 14 AND THE SEA-LEVEL CANAL OPTION.

2. TORRIJOS TOLD THE SENATORS HE HAD NO PROBLEM WITH THE ITEMS MENTIONED. HE NOTED THAT HE HAD ANNOUNCED AND DEFENDED THE MEMO OF UNDERSTANDING IN ADVANCE OF THE PLEBISCITE HERE. THE INCLUSION OF THESE MATTERS IN THE TREATY--AS
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PART OF THE SENATE'S RESOLUTION OF RATIFICATION--WOULD GIVE HIM NO PROBLEM, TORRIJOS SAID, AND WOULD NOT REQUIRE A NEW PLEBISCITE. AS FOR THE SEA LEVEL CANAL OPTION, HE REMINDED THE SENATORS THAT IT WAS INCLUDED IN THE TREATY AT THE INSISTENCE OF THE U.S. HE WOULD BE PERFECTLY HAPPY TO DROP IT IF WE WANTED TO.

3. AS FOR ANY OTHER ALTERATIONS, TORRIJOS SAID THAT HE WOULD KEEP AN OPEN MIND. HE DID NOT WISH NOW TO RULE OUT ANY POSSIBLE REVISIONS. BUT HE MADE IT QUITE CLEAR THAT IF CHANGES WERE PROPOSED AND HE ACCEPTED THEM, HE WOULD NEED FIRM ASSURANCE THAT IT WOULD MEAN THE TREATIES WOULD BE APPROVED BY THE SENATE.

4. THE GENERAL AND THE SENATOR AGREED TO KEEP IN TOUCH ON THIS MATTER AND ALSO TO DISCUSS IT FURTHER AT THE FINAL MEETING SATURDAY MORNING JUST BEFORE THE U.S. DELEGATION'S DEPARTURE.

5. AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE FOLLOWING THE MEETING, SENATOR BAKER MADE THE SAME POINT HE HAD WITH TORRIJOS: THAT HE COULD NOT SUPPORT THE TREATIES AS PRESENTLY WRITTEN WITHOUT MODIFICATION, BUT THAT WITH AMENDMENTS THAT MET HIS CONCERNS HE WOULD SUPPORT THE TREATIES. SENATOR GARN--THOUGH HE HAS HERETOFORE BEEN OUTSPOKEN IN OPPOSITION TO THE TREATIES--SAID THAT HE TOO WOULD BE WILLING TO VOTE FOR THEM IF APPROPRIATE RESERVATIONS OR AMENDMENTS WERE ADOPTED. HE SAID HIS CONCERNS INVOLVED SECURITY AND DEFENSE QUESTIONS. SENATOR CHAFEE SAID HE WAS A SUPPORTER OF THE TREATIES AND THAT HIS VISIT HERE HAD ONLY STRENGTHENED HIS CONVICTIONS.
JORDEN

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED WHITE HOUSE.
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